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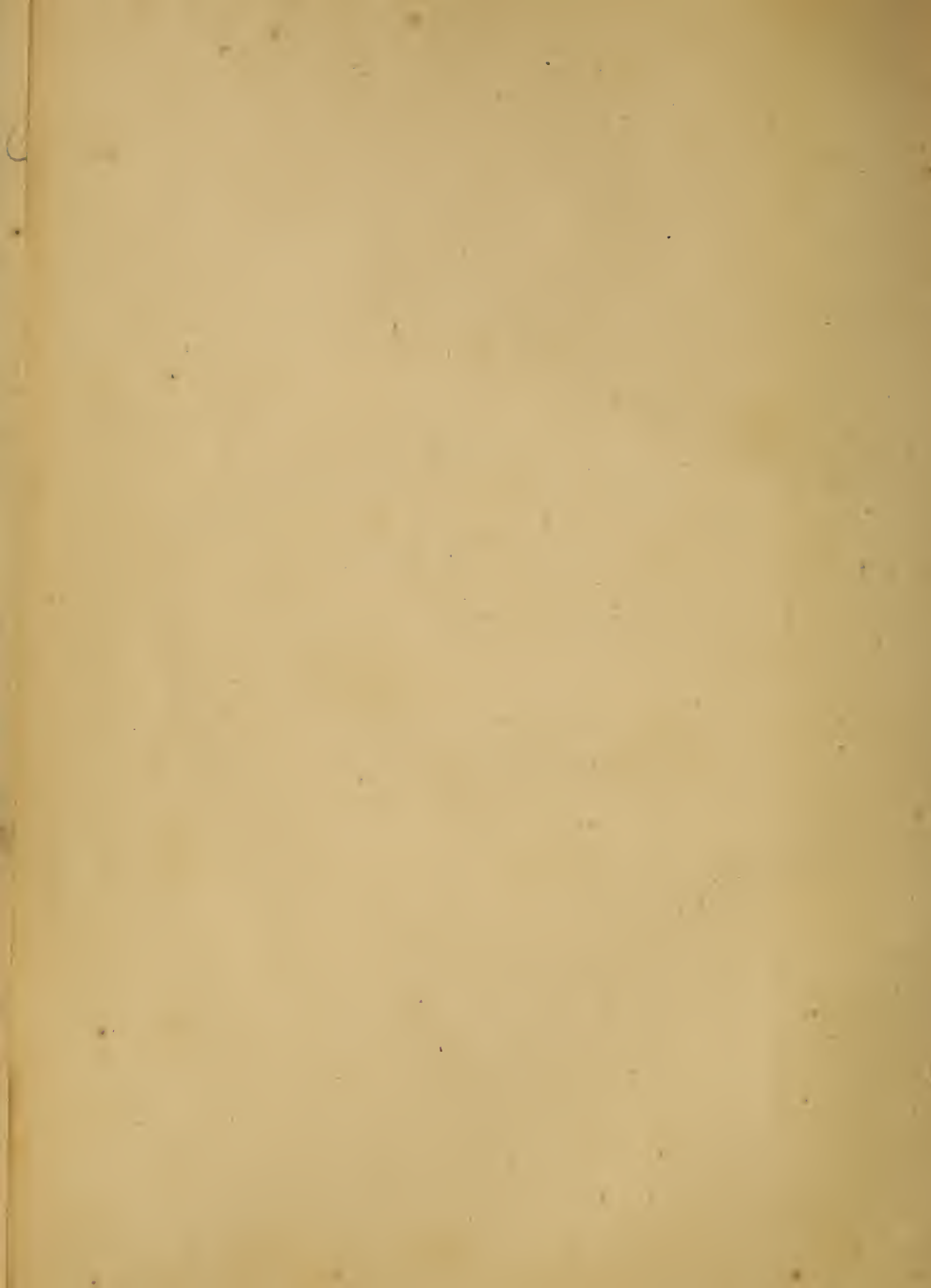
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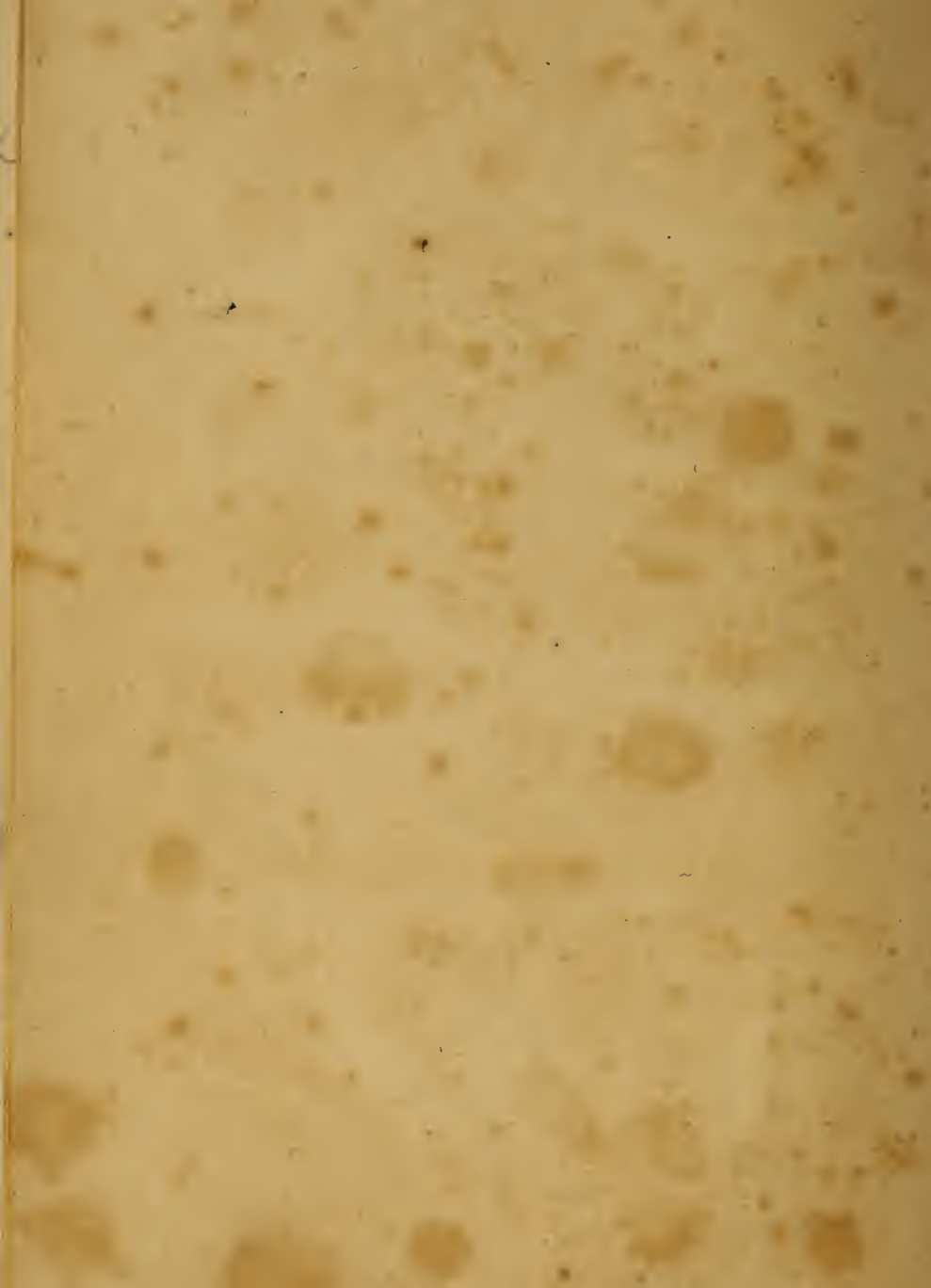
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A SHORT
TREATISE
CONCERNING THE
lawfullnesse of every mans
exercising his gift as God shall
call him thereunto.

By *John Spencer.*



LONDON,

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A
SHORT TREATISE
CONCERNING THE LAWFULL
NESSE OF EVERY MANS

exercising his gift, as God shall call
him thereunto,

THe gifts of the Spirit are in every one for the good of the whole body, and that there is no private gifts, nor private Christians that wee reade of in Scripture to proove at large out of the word of God which shall bee that which shall guide all our actions by, that what gift soever the Spirit giveth: It is for the good of the whole body, and so according to it's place in the body, the measure of grace received he is to use it for the helpe of his fellow members. to the edifying of the body: I may bring for the further clearing of this truth, the judgements of many worthy Divines, *Calvin* speaking of the communion of Saints hath these words; *The Saints which are gathered together into the fellowship of Christ with this condition, that what ever benefit God bestowes upon them, they should continually communicate one to another.* *Vrsinas* on Communion of Saints hath these words: *That all receiving one, who beleeueth are in common partakers of Christ & all his graces, as being his membes, and then that every one ought readily and chearefully to bestow their gifts and graces which they had to the common commoditie and safe of all.* *Master Perkins* on the Creede from our Vnion with Christ, and our union and communion one with another saith; *That a Christian though he be the freest man upon earth, yet he is a servant to all men, and especially to the Church of God, to doe service to the members of it by love for the good of all.* And this good is procured when we convey the gifts of God bestowed on us to our brethren, which is done these five waies. First by example, secondly by admonition, thirdly by exhortation, fourthly by consolation, fifthly by prayer, all which hee openeth and presseth to this purpose. *Master Bolton* in his generall directions for a comfortable walking with God, is full & large for this, but to prove it by severall Scriptures, in *Romans. 12.* 6. having then gifts according to the grace that is givento us whe-

whether Propheſie let us prophesie, let us according to the proportion of faith, the first of *Cor.* 12. and the 3. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every one to profit with all. *Ephes.* 4. 11. 12. and he gave some to be Apostles, some Prophets, some Evangelists, and some Teachers, and some Pastors for the edifying of the body of Christ; ~~*Ephesians*~~ 5. and the 11. Wherefore comfort your selves together, and edifie on another even as yee doe, *Heb.* 3. 13. but exhort one another daily while it is called to day, least any of you bee hardened through the deceitfulness of sinne, 1 *Cor.* 14. 31. For ye may all prophesie one by one, that all may learne and all bee comforted, in the first of *Peter* the 4. and the 10. As every one hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another as faithfull Rewards of the manifold graces of God: thus you have all these places to prove the lawfulness of all to exercise the gifts as God shall give them opportunity with conveniency, and also the Judgements of many worthy Divines: now we shall shew you the reason of it why every one ought to communicate of what God hath bestowed on them for the good of the whole body, the first reason is because God himselfe hath commanded it. The second reason is, because it was the very end of Gods bestowing these gifts upon us, for the edifying of the body of Christ. The third reason is from our neere union and communion one with another. The fourth reason is from our bretherens right to it, they have all right to our gifts and abilities. The fifth reason is this, it is the way to enlarge our owne gifts and abilities. The sixth reason is, Gods glory and the Saints example. The seventh reason is because of our enemies wiles, and Satans malice, all calling for it at our hands. Now to answer certain objections that are brought in against the universality of this truth.

The first objection is this, that none ought to preach but those in office, none else may properly be said to Preach.

To this I answer, that when the dispersed Christians were scattered in that persecution it is said that they went about preaching and the hand of the Lord was with them, and great multitudes beleaved and turned to the Lord, *Acts* 11. 19, 20, 21. But some object and say, that this is not such preaching as is mentioned in *Rom.* 10. 14, 15. but it is manifest and cleare that they strive about words and to no purpose at all; for there was that very Preaching, and that very sending as is there mentioned in that

tenth to the *Rom.* and the 15. for that preaching of the dispersed Christians was made necessary for the working of faith, else the text saith not right, in saying they beleaved: But some farther object and say, that these were all Church-officers, and so might Preach where ever they came.

To this I answer, that it could not be so, for wee never read in all the whole booke of God, that all the members of a Church was officers, but this is aparent, that all the members were scattered only Apostles, as you may see it in the 8. of the *Acts* the first. I shall give you another instance in the fourth of *Iohn* and the 39. It is said that many of the Samaritans beleaved at the report of the woman; if it be so, then one of these must needs befall those that hold none ought to Preach but those that are Church-officers, and this woman was a Church-officer, and so a Harold and an Imbassador, and so sent and so Preached, or else that the spirit was mistaken that sed they beleaved.

Another instance we have of one that was no Church officer and yet a Preacher and a publisher of the Gospel, in the eighth of *Luke* and the 38, 39. the man out of whom the devills were cast out; Christ sent him away, and bid him goe and declare what great things he had done to him, and the text saith, that he went and preached in the Cities. It is manifest that this man was no Church-officer and yet a preacher of the Gospel. Againe, what thinke you of *Moses* desire, when hee desired that all the Lords people were Prophets, either *Moses* say you jeared or else he wished that all good people were Church-officers which could not be, *Numb.* 11. 29. What thinke you of *Saul* in the first of *Sam.* 8. 10. And when they came thither to the hill, a company of the Prophets met him, and the spirit of God came upon him and he prophesied: so also the 19 of *Sam.* and the 20. and *Saul* sent messengers to take *David*, and when they saw the company of the Prophets prophesing and *Samuel* standing as appointed over them; the spirit of God was upon the messengers of *Saul*, and they prophesied all, see in the 24 verse, and he stript off his cloathes also and prophesied, now none of these were Church-officers.

But they further object, and say; that these had an extraordinarie spirit given them, and therefore might. To this I answer, that none had this extraordinary spirit, but those that pened the Scriptures or that was able to worke Miracles, But these, It is
apparent

aparent in the *Acts*. and in these places, had not such a Spirit as worked Miracles, or that pened Scriptures, And yet prophesied.

Againe to this I answere, that such a Spittit as that they had, Is promised to the people of God, in our dayes, in the second of the *Acts*. and the 18. And one my servants and one my hand-maids, I will power out in those dayes of my spirit, and they shall prophesie, but to this promise some answere, that it was made good in the Apostles times; and we must not looke for the making good of this promise in our days. To this I answere that in the Apostles times, they were called the last times; but if then they were the last dayes much more now. And so may look for the fulfilling of this promise, and we ought also to pray for the making good of it.

The second object is this, for none unlesse he be skild in arts and tongues, Is fit for the worke of the menistric, to this I answere that the scriptures doth plainly affirme, that the true understanding of scripture, comes not by humane learning, by arts and tongues, but by the spirit of God, in the first *Cor.* 2. 12. 13. Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God, that we might know the thinges that are freely given us of God: which thinges we speake not with the words, which mans wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth us, comparing spirituall thinges with spirituall.

Secondly I answer, that the naturall man cannot find out these thinges, be he never so well qualified, with all humane wisdom and learning. In the first of *Cor.* 2. 14. But the naturall man perceiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishnesse unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spirituallly deserned, in the first Chap. and the 20. ver. where is the wise, where is the Scribe, where is the disputer of this world hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world.

Thirdly I answere, that the want of furniture in skill and arts and tongues, Shall not hinder any from this knowledg, when the Lord is pleased, in the holy meanes apointed to send forth his spirit, with such illuminations, & infusions into the soule, in the first of *Cor.* 2. 10. or the spirit searcheth all thinges, yee the deepe thinges of God in the 15. *vers.* But he that is spirituall, Iudgeth all thinges,

Fourthly I answere, that God counts it his glory sometimes to hide this thing from the wise & prudent; and to reveale them

unto babes, and sucklings. Such that are distitute of humane learning in arts and tongues, which must needs be the meaning of that place in the 11. of *Matt.* 25.

Fifely I answer, that there is not onely grounds, and principles of saving truths, given to such that are distitute of humane learning, and the like, but to understand a Proverbe and the interpretations of words, of the wise : and there darke saying *Proverbs*, 1. 6. 7. *Psalme*. 25. 12.

Lastly I answer, that the Apostles desiring that others might understand these things prayeth to God for them, not that God would give them skill in arts and tongues, though it might be desired, in those that want it. But that God would give them the spirit of wisdom, and revelation in the knowledge of his sonne *Ephes.* 1. 17.

Thus you have the second obiekt answered, as God hath enabled me.

The third obiekt is this, that none ought to exercise these gifts in such a publike way but those that have a call to it.

To this I answer that all the call mentioned of in holy scriptures, was the peoples great necessity, and their great willingness to heare them and receive them. And the aprobation of godly ministers, and all this I have had for my call, but if none might Preach the Gospell, unlesse he had the consent of all. None should preach amongst us, that is for the 3. obiekt.

The fourth obiekt is this, that it may happily be lawfull in a mans family, but not in a Church, I speake in the worlds language their reason is, because one is publike, and the other private. And God hath given a private spirit, and this is to private men to exercise privately with. He hath also given a publike spirit, and this is for publike persons, which they call themselves, for a publike use.

To this I answer, that there is no members, of the body of Iesus Christ. But is of the same nature of the whole, a publike member of a publike body, and the spirit proceeding, from the head to every member is one, and the same spirit, and his gifts of like nature; publike gifts of a publike spirit, for the good of the whole body. And so in its place, according to its measure to be used, what ever gift it be; that so though the members be many, yet the body is but one, every one member of the head, and all members one of another, and though the members have severall

all officies, yet every member in the body hath some officie, and usefull gift, and that not for its owne profit alone: or the profit of two or three members next it, but for the good of the whole body, God having so placed the members in the body, that the chiefeft cannot say to the meanest, I have no need of you, nor the meanest cannot also say to the chiefeft, I am not to care for you, but every member to have the same care one of another, though this care bee manifested diversly, according to the severall officies they have in the body; and the severall gifts given it for discharge of the same; for though in respect of the Politie of Congregated bodies, the more part are out of officie, yet as we are all one body in Christ, and members one of another, their is never a member out of office, and that for the service of the whole: there are no more private Christians, then private members of Christ, neither in any other sense, can they properly be called private Christians, then they may also be called private members of Christ. Seeing that in the whole booke of God, we finde no such phrase as private Christian, or private spirit. Thus have I laboured, as the Lord hath helped me to discover the lawfulnessse of my practise, both publike and private: I have laboured to answer all the obiections, that I ever had against it unlesse it be this that though it be lawfull, yet not at this time, and that for this reason, because happily it might hinder the worke of reformation.

To this I answer, that in the worke of reformation, it is necessary that all errors should be brought to light, and that all truths should be discovered; this I finding out of Gods word to be an error that is held commonly amongst us, that rather then any man should be a publisher of the Gospel of Christ, unlesse he were skild in arts and tongues, and sent forth by our Prelates, thousands of our meeting houses should be shut up, and the people starved for want of foode, though God hath abundantly provided for them: I thought no time so fit to publish this truth by my practise as now at this time when God hath given us such glorious hopes of a glorious reformation, and when so many of those that pitties poore soules to see them lie in ignorance and blindness, and have power in their hands to redresse it. Therefore I thought no time so seasonable as this time, and thus have you all the objections that are brought against me answered.

That which occasioned me to put these few lines forth to the

view of the world, hath beene by the importunity of many that beare good will to Sion, & to this truth: also the evill aspersions that are cast upon me for this my practise; I have had annoyse; but I have seene as yet nothing out of the word of God that might dissuade me, but rather perswade me; and to encourage mee in the way to go on by none that object against it; to this day could I never procure any faire reasoning of any person whatsoever; though I have exceedingly sought it to heare their grounds what they have had against it: could it be made a parent out of Gods word, that it were unlawfull for me to goe on in this way, or that there were no neede of the discovery of Christ in the world, or that the people did not earnestly desire it, I should cease with Joy and reioycing of heart; but so long as there can be nothing found in Gods word against it, and seeing the great necessities of the people and their great willingnesse calles for it; I shall bee willing to suffer what God shall please to inflict upon me for the same: yet I am perswaded though I be trodden under foot, yet this truth shall flourish & spread it selfe forth in the world to the amasement of all that doe oppose it: and thus according to what light the Lord hath bestowed on mee out of his free love in his Sonne, I have for the satisfaction of some, published these few lines to the world.

FINIS.

John Spenser.







